

## Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

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SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 DRC-01 /151 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE 7969

INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 17153

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINR, MILI, TH

SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER DAWEE'S COMMENTS ON MILITARY COMMAND  
STRUCTURE, STUDENTS, AND THANOM

1. DCM ACCOMPANIED GENERAL O'KEEFE, COMMANDER USSAG, TO  
PAY COURTESY CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER DAWEE OCTOBER 31  
DURING WHICH DAWEE MADE INTERESTING COMMENTS ON THAI  
MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURE, RTG RELATIONS WITH STUDENTS,  
AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM.

2. COMMAND STRUCTURE: DAWEE EXPECTS POSITIONS OF SUPREME  
COMMANDER AND DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER TO BE ABOLISHED,  
BUT SUPREME COMMAND STAFF TO BE RETAINED AS JOINT STAFF  
WITH CHIEF OF STAFF SURAKIJ REPORTING TO MINISTER OF  
DEFENSE DAWEE. COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF OF THREE SERVICES  
WOULD NOT MEET AS A GROUP LIKE AMERICAN JCS, BUT WOULD  
CONTINUE TO FUNCTION AS HEADS OF SEPARATE SERVICES AND  
GOVERNMENT POLICY WOULD BE PASSED TO THEM FROM CABINET  
THROUGH MINISTER OF DEFENSE. DAWEE NOTED THAT HE WOULD  
TURN 60 DURING COMING YEAR AND SAID HE LOOK FORWARD TO  
LEAVING GOVERNMENT WHEN INTERIM SANYA CABINET IS REPLACED  
BY ELECTED GOVERNMENT.

3. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS WITH STUDENTS: DAWEE CONSIDERS  
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THAT STUDENTS POSE DANGEROUS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND NATION BUT

SAID HE DEPLORED LACK OF WISDOM OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT IN RESPONDING TO STUDENT PROTESTS. HVO SAID HE HAD ARGUED WITHIN GOVERNMENT THAT NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AND GIVEN OFFICIAL SUPPORT INSTEAD OF BEING SUPPRESSED, WHICH MIGHT DRIVE STUDENTS UNDERGROUND OR INTO ARMS OF COMMUNISTS. HE INDICATED CONSIDERABLE UNEASINESS AS TO HOW INTERIM GOVERNMENT WOULD WORK OUT RELATIONS WITH STUDENT MOVEMENT AND RESPONSES TO STUDENT DEMANDS. DAWEE SPECULATED THAT STUDENTS WOULD BE SOMEWHAT RELUCTANT TO RAISE AT THIS TIME ISSUES SUCH AS THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESCENCE, WHICH MIGHT ANTAGONIZE THE GOVERNMENT OR THE MILITARY, BECAUSE THEY STILL FEARED POSSIBLE PROSECUTION FOR ACTIONS DURING RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS. HOWEVER, IF GENERAL AMNESTY NOW UNDER DISCUSSION IS DECLARED, THIS INHIBITION WOULD BE LIFTED. DAWEE IMPLIED THAT UNDERSTANDING RTG SUPPORT OF MODERATE STUDENT LEADERS WILL BE NECESSARY TO PREVENT SITUATION FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND.

4. FIELD MARSHAL THANOM: DAWEE RIDICULED IDEA THAT THANOM HAD BEEN A DICTATOR, NOTING THAT HE WAS MILD MANNERED MAN WHO HAD DIFFICULTY MAKING UP HIS MIND. DAWEE REMARKED THAT THANOM SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN THE KITCHEN DOING HOUSEWORK, LEAVING MANAGEMENT OF AFFAIRS TO HIS STRONG-WILLED WIFE. DAWEE SAID THAT HE AND GENERAL KRIT, ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, WERE ALONE AMONG THE MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES COUNCIL TO VOTE AGAINST EXTENDING THANOM'S ACTIVE DUTY AS FIELD MARSHAL LAST SPRING. RETIREMENT THEN WOULD HAVE ALLOWED THANOM TO LEAVE OFFICE WITH HONOR AS ELDER STATESMAN. DAWEE CLAIMED THAT REACTION OF THANOM'S SUPPORTERS TO THIS DISSENT WAS SO VIOLENT THAT HE AND KRIT HESITATED TO BE SEEN TOGETHER IN ENSURING MONTHS LEST THEY BE CHARGED WITH PLOTTING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. DAWEE PRESUMABLY CITED THIS INCIDENT BOTH TO EXPLAIN HIS FALL FROM GRACE IN PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT AND TO IMPRESS ON HIS AMERICAN VISITORS HIS EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH GENERAL KRIT.

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